

leon) never would have consented; giving up Belgium, which the nation had been taught to consider as an integral part of the dominions of France, and of which it would never quietly submit to be stripped. He said he spoke not from what he had heard, 'for I have no news except from the newspapers, or from the reports of travellers; but I know the French character well: it is not proud, like the English, but it is much more vainglorious; vanity is its principal feature, and the vanity of a Frenchman makes him capable of undertaking anything.' The army was naturally attached to him (Napoleon), 'for I had been their comrade. I had had some success with them, and they knew that I recompensed them handsomely: but at present they feel that they are nothing. There are at this moment in France 700,000 men who have borne arms, and the last campaigns have only served *to* show them how superior they are to their enemies. They render justice to the valor of your British troops; but they despise all the rest.' "¹

This last assertion 'was, doubtless, insincere. More than one bloody campaign had taught the French soldiery that the Russians and their iron columns were not to be despised, and in the course of the war in 1813 and 1814 the Austrians and Prussians (particularly the latter) had commanded respect.

Bonaparte then talked about the conscription, and spoke of corps of a higher description for gentlemen to serve in, "For," said he, "I know it is hard for a gentleman to be taken for a common soldier." He said he had always been desirous of bringing forward the nobility, and that he had had in his army many young men of old families who behaved very well.

¹ The Allies most imprudently restored, without any stipulation whatever, all the French prisoners they had taken during the war. In this manner more than 150,000 men, for the most part tried soldiers, were thrown like a lava-stream into France, where they soon openly expressed their old enthusiasm for Napoleon, and their contempt and hatred of the new Government. They toasted the ex-Emperor as "the Little Corporal," or "Corporal Violet," and they confidently repeated wherever they went, "He will come back with the spring." It was impossible to prove to these men that had they been present in France, instead of being, as they were, prisoners to the Russians, the Prussians, and the Austrians, Paris could ever have been taken by the Allies: there was no convincing them that Napoleon had not been betrayed, for when did the French ever acknowledge to have been defeated, except through treachery? — *Editor of 1836 edition.*